

# Haiku Lessons: An International Study Exploring the Potential of Haiku Writing and Haiku Sharing in Teaching English as a Second Language and Environmental Education

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## Abstract

Haiku writing in the English language, as opposed to Japanese, is the focus of my study. Specifically, I looked at how English language haiku writing in North America (including Mexico) can be a tool for:

1. Researchers to gain insight into the ways haiku writing and haiku sharing can be studied from various perspectives including those of Literacy Education, Environmental Education, and English Language Education.
2. Japanese educators to learn from as they seek improvements in English Language instruction in Japan.
3. Canadian teachers in Ontario and beyond to learn from as they continue to develop Environmental Education policy and practice
4. Students to experience haiku in innovative ways that tackle some of the myths of haiku writing, opening the opportunity for increased capacity, awareness and understanding.

Participants were students in Grade 2 Mexico. They wrote haiku, guided by the series of 4 lessons, which have been designed and piloted by Professor Makoto Nakanishi, Haiku scholar and a champion of innovative methods to improve haiku instruction and practice. Each participant class also took part in the kukai, or haiku sharing circle, which is part of this haiku lesson cycle.

Each class learned about season words, and all students were encouraged to use season words in their poems. All students wrote in English. The simple, straightforward definition of haiku as "a short poem with three lines and seasonal words" was used with the students. This definition avoids the syllable-counting approach of the familiar, but somewhat defining and often limiting 5-7-5 concept of haiku structure, preferring something more organic and conducive to achieving the purpose of haiku written in English. Data collected include the students' poems, the responses from the sharing circles, interviews with the classroom teachers, reflections of the students, season word lists created, and curriculum documents. The project is broader than its clear contribution as a literacy study. It illuminates and has broad potential impact for haiku writing in more than one curriculum area. The study's goals include a strong plan to disseminate the results through appropriate and robust channels of teacher professional development.

The poems and ensuing haiku sharing affirm that haiku are accessible, enjoyable and motivating to students as young as Grade 2, seven years old.

In addition, these students of English as a Second Language were able to write and discuss their haiku in English. Accessibility and engagement are key factors in the success of the four Nakanishi haiku lessons. The inclusion of seasonal references and words, in conjunction going outside to use the five senses fully when gathering haiku writing material, speaks to the potential of haiku to bridge from Literacy-based classes to Environmental Education classes and English as a Second Language curricula. These curricular implications can be constructively extended with further study and documentation and through international partnerships in haiku writing.

**要旨：** 本稿では日本の俳句作りと対照的な、英語による俳句制作について論じていく。メキシコや北米での英語の俳句作りの様子から、俳句制作が多岐にわたる学術分野となりうることが明らかとなった。本稿で論じる活動を通して俳句作りと俳句の読み合いがリテラシー教育、環境教育、英語教育の研究対象となることを研究者は認知することになる。また英語教育の改善策を日本の指導者は学び取ることになる。そして環境教育の政策と実践に取り組み続ける必要性をカナダオンタリオ州等の教師は認識することになる。さらに知的能力、認識力、そして見識の向上につながる俳句作りの魅力を参加生徒はこれまでにないかたちで体験することになる。本活動の参加者はメキシコの小学2年生の生徒である。俳句学者中西淳氏の4回にわたる講義を受けた後、実際に俳句を作り、それぞれの作品を読み合う。生徒たちは季語を学び、季語を英語の俳句の中に取り入れる。俳句は簡潔且つ直接的な表現形式からなり、季語を含めた3行からなる英語の短詩としてまとめられる。英語に馴染みのある音節数で見ると、日本語と同じく五七五の構成に類似するよう工夫する。本稿は実際に生徒が制作した俳句とそれを読んだ生徒、教員のコメント、さらに季語リストと学習内容の資料を含んでいる。

本プロジェクトは俳句制作がリテラシー研究の一領域、あるいは一科目の位置づけにとどまらず、多岐の領域に渡る分野であることを提示する。研究目的は教員の教育活動の進捗の中にうかがえる俳句作りからの帰結を学術的に広めることにある。英語で俳句を作り、俳句を読み合うことで、俳句は理解しやすく楽しいものであること、また7歳の生徒たちへの学習の動機づけとなることを示す。第二言語として英語を学ぶ生徒が英語を用いて俳句を作り、俳句について語り合うことが可能であることが例証されるが、中西氏による俳句講座の成功の主要因は講座そのものが理解しやすく、また生徒が熱心に取り組んだことにあった。季語などの材料を探すために外に出て五感すべてを活用する俳句作りは、リテラシー教育から環境教育、第二言語学習までをつなぐ特性を備えている。国際的な俳句のパートナーシップを通じて俳句作りの教科としての特性が広まり、さらなる発展研究が展開されることが期待される。

### Preliminary Notes

This is a report on a new aspect of the haiku research work, envisioned, designed, and carried out in Japan and Toronto by Professor Makoto Nakanishi of Ehime University, in Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture, Japan. The research reported here was carried out by Elizabeth Morley, Visiting Scholar at Kobe Shinwa Women's University, Kobe, Japan and Principal Emerita, Jackman Institute of Child Study, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. This research and these findings relate to an extension of four haiku lessons, which are Professor Nakanishi's, and, with his collaboration, this work explores two new themes and reports the findings here.

This haiku research began with an invitation in 2006 from Professor Nakanishi to the Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School, OISE, University of Toronto, Canada. He proposed coming to the school in Toronto to teach haiku writing and to engage the students in haiku-sharing circles, using an approach to instruction that he developed. His research had as a goal piloting the lessons in an international setting. He has written the results in:

*Nakanishi, Makoto. (2009) Teaching Haiku to Elementary School Students in North America. Kokugoka Kyoiku, 66, 59-66.*

From this early connection, Professor Nakanishi and I maintained conversation about haiku writing when I was at Kobe Shinwa University, and he returned to the Toronto school in 2015 to extend his study into an international haiku exchange between Japan and Canada. This he accomplished and published an account of it in:

*Nakanishi, Makoto. (2016) The Study of Effective Methods of Teaching Haiku and Its Use for International Exchange. Kokugoka Kyoiku, 80, 71-78.*

During 2016, we began to plan a further extension. Makoto Nakanishi again returned to Toronto and conducted a further study in the Jackman ICS Lab School. At the same time, we planned for me to research separately two aspects of the haiku work that will extend its reach further into the educational world of classroom teachers and the world of research.

The first focus of this work is an exploration of whether and how the Nakanishi lessons work in student populations which are made up of, primarily, English Language Learners. (ELL). This has implications for English as a Second language (ESL) teaching internationally, including in Japan and Canada. Second, with the same data and lessons, I explored the impact of including season words/nature references in the haiku that the international students write. This has implications for Eco-Education and the Environmental Education Curriculum in Canada, Japan and internationally.

*chocolate cake  
smell is good and warm-  
cold winter day*

*By Sonia, 7 years old, English Language Learner,  
Westhill Institute Elementary School, Mexico.*

### Description of the Project

Haiku writing has been part of the poetry writing and literacy class curricula in North America for many decades. In Japan, birthplace of haiku, hundreds of years of haiku writing, have preceded its uptake in other countries and in other languages. Professor Makoto Nakanishi has designed a four-lesson approach to teaching Haiku, an approach that he has piloted in Japan and has partnered with The Institute of Child Study in Toronto to explore in North America in previous studies. He raises important questions about English haiku writing and uses these to shape his lessons. He uses a definition of Haiku which is simple and easily accessible to children. He tells them that haiku is the world's shortest poem and that each haiku has three lines and season words. His definition does not include the "rule", familiar to most North American children who have been taught to write haiku, of a 5-7-5 syllable structure for the three lines of the haiku. He, and others, see below, argue that 17 syllables are not a necessary structure for English haiku. He points out that 5-7-5 grew from structures in Japanese language that do not correspond to English syllables exactly. Instead, he proposes that students avoid syllable counting and strive instead for meaning, observing and capturing, like a

snapshot, a moment in time, present or in memory. He encourages the use of all the senses. Haruo Shirane, Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture, East Asian Studies Department, at Columbia University in New York, proposes in his article listed below a definition of English-Language haiku which we will adopt for the purposes of this study. It is:

"In short while haiku in English is inspired by Japanese haiku, it cannot and should not try to duplicate the rules of Japanese haiku because of significant differences in language, culture and history. A definition of English-language haiku will thus, by nature, differ from that of Japanese haiku. If pressed to give a definition of English-language haiku that would encompass the points that I have made here, I would say, echoing the spirit of Basho's own poetry, that *haiku in English is a short poem, usually written in one to three lines, that seeks out new and revealing perspectives on the human and physical condition, focusing on the immediate physical world around us, particularly that of nature, and on the workings of the human imagination, memory, literature and history*". (Shirane, H. Beyond the Haiku Moment)

An example of this type of haiku, without the 5-7-5 syllable structure, is the translation of one of Japan's most beloved haiku. This one, by Basho:

*old pond-  
a frog leaps in  
the sound of water*  
Basho

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of innovative haiku teaching methods. By piloting these methods with English Language speakers and English Language learners in North America, data can be added to the ongoing study by Professor Makoto Nakanishi of these methods in Japan and Toronto, Canada. Two special areas of focus that are unique to the Mexico study are:

- How can haiku writing and sharing in English enhance the teaching of English as a Second Language, both in Japan and internationally?
- How can haiku writing and sharing in English enhance the teaching of Environmental Education?

These two guiding questions allow the researcher to analyze the data to understand how haiku can be an effective tool in several curricular domains internationally.

This study also explores the writing of haiku for English Language Learners. The impetus springs from the fact that Japan is reviewing English language instruction, and will by 2020 bring that instruction into the Elementary Schools from grades 3 for the first time. There will be two years of piloting programs prior to full uptake. This study aims to look at populations outside Japan where English is already taught to young learners, in this case in a bilingual school in Mexico, to see if haiku writing and sharing supports English language learning for these ages and stages of second language acquisition. The resources cited state the issue in Japan, and explore curriculum in the Province of Ontario, Canada, for links to the potential of haiku writing. Reference is also made to the philosophy of John Dewey, who founded the first Lab School, recognizing the potential of the university-based school to be a hub of exploration and betterment of education for all. This study takes seriously the reach of Lab School research and experience to impact public policy, in this case on innovative lessons for the teaching of English as a second language.

*a lemon pie  
with lemon cream-*

*snow falling.*

*By Yuen, 7 years old, English Language Learner,  
Westhill Institute Elementary School, Mexico.*

## 1. Relevant Research Literature and Academic Resources

Relevant literature has been an impetus for this study and has sparked and guided this study on three fronts. There is a body of academic literature about haiku, some specifically about school children writing and sharing haiku. Resources related to this aspect of the study are listed in this report's final section, entitled "Resources on Haiku". Second, there is literature which addresses the research question: How can haiku writing and sharing in English enhance the teaching of English as a Second Language, both in Japan and internationally? This material is related to teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), including curriculum guidelines that open opportunities for the use of haiku, written in English, to sustain and support English language learners. Resources related to this aspect of the study are listed below, in the final section, entitled "Resources on English Language Learning". Third, the study used the extensive literature on environmental education, its value and the relevancy of taking children outside to observe. It is used as impetus for the question: How can haiku writing and sharing in English enhance the teaching of Environmental Education? Haiku, taught through the Nakanishi lessons, include season words and reference to nature. This can serve to enrich environmental learning, and is a natural and fruitful fit with environmental curricula. This section of the literature is entitled "Resources on Environmental Education". See Resources lists.

Another prime impetus for the study is the relationship between haiku and the natural world. There is a tradition of including a season word or reference to nature in haiku in Japan. In North America, there are some trends away from season words in haiku. However, helping children to use, see, and capture an experience in the natural environment - whether it is a park, a forest, or an urban playground - is part of the Haiku Lessons that will be used in this study. The researchers will connect to the book *Natural Curiosity*, which is a teacher resource that was launched in 2011 by the Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School. Its focus is on Environmental Inquiry. It offers elementary school teachers a guide to making both the content and process of learning about the world more engaging and relevant to their students. This study will examine what role haiku might play in making this possible by involving children in outdoor observations and teaching the use of season words in each poem. In fact, this study is shaped by students' own questions and observation about the world - their natural curiosity - and noticing that haiku writing and sharing are processes that place children in direct contact and relationship with the natural environment.

*A black bird  
Ah! Ah! Ah!  
Flies to the sky.*

*By Mateo 7 years old, English Language Learner,  
Westhill Institute Elementary School, Mexico.*

## The design of the project

The project follows four steps.

1. Making Haiku: Using the four haiku lessons designed by Professor Makoto Nakanishi in Japan, the researchers first introduce the steps of haiku writing, the technique of season words, juxtaposition, and ask the children in each country and school to write haiku.
2. Sharing Haiku: A haiku-sharing circle, "kukai", is held in each class, appreciating and evaluating each others'

poems, first with no names of the authors, and then revealing the names of authors.

3. Analyzing results: the researcher will analyze the results of the haiku writing and sharing.
4. Dissemination: The results will be compiled and shared into communities of educators internationally.

Professor Makoto Nakanishi describes the lessons this way, "There exist three major haiku schools [of thought] in North America. One is the conservative school, which emphasizes the importance of the traditional three lines of five - seven - five syllables and the use of seasonal words. Another is the progressive school which denies the traditional form of haiku and encourages creative haiku writing. And the last one is the school in the middle which accepts either way. In the West, three lines are widely used and accepted as the most basic form of haiku. The use of 17 syllables (3 lines of five - seven - five syllables) tends to be the most popular in learning to write haiku in North American schools. On the other hand, many modern haiku poets prefer to use many fewer syllables since, compared to Japanese, 17 syllables can be considered to contain too much information which is against the idea of simplicity of haiku. The rule of 17 syllables sometimes prevents students from focusing on writing haiku creatively. At the same time, writing simply, enjoying this simplicity, is the essence of haiku. So instead of fixating on the exact number of syllables, I have found that it is preferable to use a more flexible approach to the syllable count. As to the seasonal words, since most other countries do not have a seasonal word dictionary like we do in Japan, and some countries do not have four seasons, the use of seasonal words in haiku is not considered essential around the world. However, some schools and poets have made their own regional season word dictionaries reflecting their own regional climate. I believe that using the idea of season words in haiku in other countries will increase the depth of communication and understanding among young students. The countries involved in this study have their own four seasons and the process of students discovering their own seasonal words will help them to nurture their sensitivities to the natural world."

Hence, for this study, it is decided to define haiku to the students as a short poem, using three lines, with seasonal words included, and with no reference to syllable counting.

#### Lesson One: The Collection of Seasonal Words.

Short preliminary lesson of 15 minutes and opportunity for students to add words throughout the days. As there is no seasonal word dictionary in Toronto or in Mexico City. Lesson one involves the children in gathering their own collection of words that symbolize the particular season at the time of the lessons. Categories of seasonal words are: Weather, Sky, Earth, People, Animals and Insects, Plants, and Events.

#### Lesson Two: Writing the first two lines of haiku

30 minute lesson. Using a handout, the children come outside with their teachers and the researchers, to write two lines of words that capture a moment. There are 4 spaces for haiku on each handout and students may write more. Writing begins by taking place outside, with the possibility of completion inside the classroom or at home. Students are also encouraged to think and write more haiku at home if they notice something they would like to capture.

#### Lesson Three: Finishing Haiku

30 -60 minute lesson. Juxtaposition is described. Juxtaposition is often key to successful haiku. The contrast of two images in haiku is instrumental in creating resonance. Professor Nakanishi explains: "Juxtaposition can create unexpected and interesting affects in haiku by putting two seemingly unrelated concepts together. In my lessons, I use seasonal words and haiku materials as two objects for juxtaposition. To make it easier to write haiku, I break down the steps into A and B. In step A, students collect materials, short sentences, for haiku, and in Step B, they finish haiku by using juxtaposition techniques. I tell them that the trick is to capture a moment as if they are taking the photo. I give them I handout (Figure 1) and the students work on it outside, inside the classroom, and possibly as homework. In Step B, I ask them to replace "I found" in the handout with a seasonal word which can come at the top or the bottom of the



poem". Examples of adding the third line with a seasonal word are shared. The class sees examples of how the different placements of the season word line affect the messages, impressions and feelings of the poem. Students work to complete the third line of each of their haiku poems.

#### Lesson Four: Haiku Sharing Circle (Kukai)

(60 minutes) Haiku appreciation is an essential element in Haiku work. By responding to each poem, one from each classmate, without the author's name attached, students gain understanding of others' thoughts and their own. They can see the interest created by the season word, feel the senses at work, visualize images that have meaning for themselves, learn to evaluate generously, and support and appreciate others' points of view. Professor Nakanishi says, "First of all, the students experience joy in verbalizing their feelings and experiences. It also helps to build a sense of community in the classroom through sharing. And it helps students to understand and discover something about themselves and about their peers. In order to maximize those possible benefits, I make sure to help students to be more aware of their feelings, to bring them out into words, to shake their perceptions, and to bring out a sense of surprise which will motivate students to learn more." Very similar haiku-sharing methods were used in Japanese schools, in Toronto, and in Mexico City.

The Nakanishi haiku sharing proceeds in this manner:

The researcher/teacher goes over all the students' haiku and chooses one from each student after the haiku writing lesson. I wrote the selected haiku down on a big sheets of paper and placed them on the blackboard one at a time, without author's names, at the beginning of the next class which was the start of the haiku appreciation circle lesson. I read each haiku aloud, and asked the students for their response to the poem, asking "What do you see and feel, smell, hear?". What do you like about this haiku? What thoughts are in your mind's eye as you read this? I encouraged as many as wanted to to speak. I also gave some of my own evaluation or asked a question from time to time. After the reflection, the students had three chances to guess whose work it was. The author revealed who wrote it.

Students' reflections: Students are asked their thoughts on Haiku writing, as the final part of Lesson Four.

Teacher Interview: This happened several days after the research and addressed three questions: What did you notice about the students while they were haiku writing and sharing? Did anything surprise you? What were your overall impressions of haiku writing and sharing?

#### **The Setting and Procedures for the Research**

This phase of the study was conducted in Westhill Institute Elementary School, Santa Fe, Mexico City, Mexico. Permission to proceed with the project was acquired through the assistance of Teacher, Alex Morley and Principal, Jason Johnston. This study proceeded as part of the regular teaching curriculum, and adhered fully to all required guidelines for confidentiality, anonymity, and storage of data. The procedures are as outlined above for each lesson. Poems will be safeguarded and photos were taken with permissions only and used for academic dissemination only.

Of importance are the demographics of the school. It is an uncommonly good match for a study of children's writing when it is important to see the work of students with English as a second language. Here is a profile of Westhill Institute Elementary and the classes in the study:

Westhill Institute Elementary is an independent school in Mexico City, It consists of Preschool, Elementary, Middle and High School through Grade 12, as well as a University and a Medical School. The school is bilingual Spanish and English, though many of the students speak at least one other language at home. These languages range from Portuguese, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian sub-continental languages and dialects, Arabic to

European languages. Each student is taught in English by an English-speaking teacher for half of the day and in Spanish by a native Spanish speaker for half of each day. The demographics of the school are a mix of Mexican families whose children have Spanish as their first language (approximately 50%) and International families (approximately 50%) whose children may speak one of many languages at home, and perhaps Spanish in the community. Of the students in the Haiku Research class, only one spoke English as a first language. Several others were comfortable with a working level of English. Some were not fluent in any language other than their mother tongue. For some, by the time they are in Grade 2, it is their 5<sup>th</sup> year at Westhill or a similar school that places high value on learning English. Certainly, English Language Learners (ELL) are predominant in every class. The school works to provide English as a core experience for the students, encouraging family events and communication in English, yet it is not at all an English-only school, consistent with its bilingual structure of each day for each student. Many of the students' families are living in Mexico for parental work-related reasons, sometimes for shorter than longer duration.

The school has an active Special Education program working with those students who have been assessed internally or external to the school as requiring learning support. These students are integrated into regular classrooms of typically developing students, supported as needed by classroom teachers and Special Education teachers.

Of significance is the fact that the school teaches the International Baccalaureate program (IB). It is an inquiry-based program which encourages deep thinking and problem-solving.

The research took place in two Grade 2 classes:

Number of students: 10 to 15 students per class

Age: 7 years,

English capacity: The range included a continuum from very weak through somewhat proficient to competent in English as a second language.

Structure of the lessons in the January 2017 lessons: The four lessons were taught by the researcher. After observing the lessons as taught at Jackman ICS in December 2016 by Makoto Nakanishi, I taught in Mexico in a manner as close to identical as possible to his, with two exceptions: the Haiku Handout sheet (Figure 1); had only spaces for 4 Haiku instead of his 8 because the children were three years younger than his project classes and might take more time to write their thoughts, though children were encouraged to write more if they wished and I did not use the word "juxtaposition" but rather explained what that meant in a couple of simple sentences.

Protocols: "Haiku is a short poem and has only two rules : three lines, season words".

Dictionary : The classes created an extensive list of season words which guided but did not solely limit or define the students' use of seasonal references.

Seasonal context: It was winter in Mexico. The season is variable - warm days and very cool nights. Mexico City and Santa Fe are at a very high elevation and cool weather is a reality. Some children had lived in the past in countries where winter means snow and ice. In the Mexico City context, the mountains which surround the school are often not visible due to clouds or pollution, but the days when we wrote Haiku, the mountains were clearly visible and some were snow capped. The sun shone and the mountains gleamed. The playground was open air space with picnic tables, a climbing frame, artificial grass and age-appropriate sports equipment. Its notable features were: a few shade trees, much sun exposure, a high altitude space with a mountain view in the distance, spots of shade, and children of mixed ages. This is the space we used for the outdoor portion of the haiku classes.

Timing of classes : Classes were the same as Makoto Nakanishi's at ICS but spread across 2 days instead of 4: Each of the two classes had a morning and an afternoon class on each of two days.

Figure 1.

**Haiku**

Collect some snapshots in your life as materials for haiku

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

**Examples**

I find <u>popcorn</u> <u>pops fast</u>	I find <u>coffee brewing</u> <u>morning time</u>
I find <u>the piggy bank</u> <u>with not a coin</u>	I find <u>my dog's nose</u> <u>snoring softly</u>
I find <u>jackets hung</u> <u>on the fence</u>	I find <u>treasures</u> <u>long lost</u>
I find <u>letters</u> <u>on the steamed window</u>	I find <u>grandpa waves his hand</u> <u>at the station</u>

Fill in the blanks. Try not to use season words nor words describing your feelings - yet!

I find  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

I find  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

I find  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

I find  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Analysis of data, poems, responses, and potentials.

The project was assessed against the utility found for the use of haiku lessons in various settings, those that are focused in Environmental Education and those where students are English Language Learners. These qualitative reflections and questions were central to the study:

- What was happening in and among students?
- What level of language is being used?
- What evidence of sensitivity to and awareness of nature is present?
- What evidence of engagement in writing and sharing is present?

### The Season Words

Collecting seasonal words proved to be motivating for the children as they brought their own very diverse cultural experiences together with their shared Mexican experiences. (Figure 2) Mexico has four seasons, though some say there



are just two, "wet and dry". The hot, sunny days of winter, combined with very cool evenings and nights dominated their word choices, followed in popularity by Christmas references, and the trees and birds of winter. In writing their poems, the students often went beyond the list of generated season words, to add the exact seasonal phrase that they had in mind to complete their haiku.

Figure 2

### **Some of the Season Words Generated by the Grade 2's, Mexico City, January 2017**

#### **Weather**

Chilly, cold, winter, sunny, cool, wintery days, , flowers, rain, hail, snowy,

#### **Sky/Earth**

Full moon, snow, winter mountain, bright stars, blue skies, sunny, falling leaves, icy

Fireworks, trees

#### **People/Life**

Sweater, jacket, coat, snow man, holiday, Santa, visit family, skating,

Christmas, wool hat, ice skating, Elf, elves, gloves, ugly jackets, candy canes, sleigh, presents, chimney, fireplace

#### **Animals/Birds**

Reindeer, winter birds, turkey, fox, polar bears, owls, penguins, wolves, white and grey, dogs

#### **Plants**

Winter gardens, poinsettias (Noche Buenas), leaves fall

#### **Events**

Christmas, wool hat, ice skating, Noche Buena, family meals, holidays, beach, swimming, grandparents visit, happy days, January, New Year. Three Kings, Los Reyes Magos

### **The Poems**

The poems themselves form a strong compelling data set that drives several conclusions and implications for the study. Initially, it is important to note again:

- The students were all in Grade 2, within the year that they turn seven years old
- With one exception, all of the children were not native English speakers,. They were in varying stages of English language acquisition, but for each child, writing haiku in English was an exercise in expressing, shaping, and using a second language.
- All of the students in each class wrote haiku. With ranging abilities among the students, what was common across all was the class culture of all students contributing to the best of their ability. Each student produced more than one haiku in English, most three or four.
- The poems below are samples of each student's work, one haiku from each student who participated in this study.
- Students are three years younger than those in Prof. Nakanishi's partner study of Grade 5 children. This is a planned feature of the research. We are interested in looking at the capacity of English Language Learners to write haiku and at what ages it might be possible to introduce haiku writing to an ESL curriculum
- Names are changed for privacy

Winter -  
my paper is flying  
to the Winter.  
*By Marta*

a big black bird -  
a monster in the park  
running  
*By Samuel*

I can see trees.  
Cocoanut in palm trees.  
Hot and sunny.  
*By Pedro*

A park  
with a slide.  
It's cold.  
*By Elena.*

A lemon pie  
with lemon cream-  
snow falling.  
*By Yuen*

Play -  
the beach, my home, the swimming pool.  
Winter holiday.  
*By Adriano*

Chips and fish.  
Very good.  
Christmas time.  
*By Juan Pedro*

My dog playing in the snow.  
A fox playing in the snow  
In a movie.  
*By Elena B.*

A black bird  
Ah! Ah! Ah!  
Flies to the sky.  
*By Matteo*

Waterpark  
Down a waterslide  
Closed in winter  
*By Mike*

The tree is nice.  
Cones.  
Green and brown cones.  
*By Karen*

Chocolate cake  
Smell is good and warm  
Cold winter day  
*By Sonia*

Mountains and birds  
Playground and kids -  
Leaves falling  
*By Alycia*

The soccer ball  
hitting the soccer player -  
Sunny and hot  
*By Carlos*

Little boys  
Big boys.  
Cool snow.  
*By Miu*

a bird flying to the sky on Christmas Eve -  
my Mom sits and eats  
and sees the bird flying.  
*By Junko*

A big tree  
sun in its leaves,  
around the tree, Noche Buenas\*  
*By Karina*

\*In Spanish, Noche Buenas are red Christmas flowers, called poinsettias in English

a bird, a chiliwili\*,  
a tree of China\*\*,  
with flower of pink.  
*By Denise*

\* a chiliwili is an insect, black with red dots

\*\* a tree with pink blossoms in winter

a pink flower of China  
bird singing and sun shiny  
a blue sky.  
*By Francesca*

A bird.  
A tree of China.  
A red leaf.  
*By Roni*

Blue skies,  
Clouds,  
Earth  
*By Emilio*

Games and buildings  
People and cars  
Winter birds.  
*By Hani*

Skies of blue  
Tree of green -  
Kids play in the wind.  
*By Max*

### Discussion of the Students' Haiku and Haiku Sharing

The Nakanishi method of teaching haiku is process-oriented, over product-focused, and emphasizes that haiku are not complete when the author is finished but rather that haiku continue to grow more complete as readers respond to the poems. This being a foundational belief that is reflected in the methodology, this discussion will include looking at the haiku sharing circles as part of the process for seeing the poems through the progressive lens of "works in progress".

Each student wrote haiku that followed the initial instructions given entirely in English in Lesson Two and Three. Each wrote one, or in most cases more, short poems, of three lines containing a seasonal phrase or reference. The poems that emerged met the study's goals for haiku writing in English by 7 year olds. Beyond this, the poems are of a level of sophistication that evidences engagement in expressing something real and personal and in capturing a significant small moment for each student author. The discussion will mention the areas of special focus for this study.

- How can haiku writing and sharing in English enhance the teaching of English as a Second Language, both in Japan and internationally?

As some countries, including Japan, are looking to shift teaching of English into lower elementary grades than previous practices afforded, discovering that haiku is both accessible, and enjoyable for young students who have limited English abilities, is significant and useful. It is expected that piloting will begin in Japan in the next two years of taking English as a Second Language to the Grade 3 level. We have been encouraged by this study to provide evidence that haiku is effective with young students who are learning English. In fact, the teacher interview indicated that haiku writing was engaging, involved all learners, had many entry points for a range of learners, and resulted in a poem each student appeared to feel proud of. Three examples:

1. One student, who rarely writes, participated and received applause from his peers for a poem the children enjoyed just as they seemed to delight in seeing their friend's success in this activity.
2. Another student became a leader in creating a verbal story to accompany each of his friends' poems, using his "mind's eye" to imagine what was happening just before, during, or after the "snapshot moment" of the poem. This student has special education support for writing and for organizing his thoughts on paper. Haiku-sharing allowed success on several levels. He was able to show what he knows in a verbal way. In the haiku sharing circle, his imagination was a prized gift to the class.
3. A shy child speaks very little. His work was also greeted with applause from his peers. It was a creative and

affirming circle of experience for him.

In fact, for what appeared to be every student, haiku sharing elicited both commitment and excitement. There was cheering, applause and discoveries of something new about their friends. There was humility as well as pride when authors raised their hands to claim a poem as their own. Affirmation seemed to be the natural response when students were evaluating each other's haiku work. Deepening understanding of self and others, always a potential and hoped for outcome for participants, seemed to have been the real outcome of the haiku lessons we shared.

In terms of English language use, the students surprised themselves at times. One child said, "I can't believe I wrote that in English! ", after her haiku was warmly received by others. From the beginning, the students seemed intent on finding and using the right word for what they had in mind. The classroom teacher regularly helps the student find vocabulary for their thoughts and these lessons were no exception, but the students seemed particularly eager to make their short poems count somehow, increasing the weight of the haiku with careful word choice. Encouraged to use their 5 senses, they called out that they could smell the chocolate cake, they wanted to taste some of the lemon pie that appeared in two poems.

- How can haiku writing and sharing in English enhance the teaching of Environmental Education?

The potential impact on Environmental Education Curricula in all three countries is significant. Haiku writing, with its portable, nature-based protocols, as used in this study, can be a contribution to outdoor appreciation and meaning-making for several grade levels and domains. The students and teachers who were part of the study embraced going outside as part of the protocols. To explore the relationship between Haiku teaching and use of the outdoors (Environmental Ed) is to enter the territory of haiku written in Japan and those in North America, where a subset of writers do not include season words as a necessary component of the form. This study argues for this inclusion however, allowing the children to create meaning by creating their own dictionaries of season words specific to their climate and culture, going outside as part of the writing process, and learning about juxtaposing two lines poetry with seasonal pivotal words. There was a discussion among the students about whether the black birds near the school playground were winter birds or all-year-round birds. One girl said, " I look at it this way. I never noticed those birds before, so I am going to call them winter birds today, because it is winter." Noticing is exactly what haiku writing scaffolds naturally and nearly effortlessly. The poems in this data set use skies, trees, birds, flowers, the sun, snow, clouds and temperature to ground their snapshots of life. Paying attention to the out of doors brought a richness to the poems that begs for almost daily exposure to this sort of invitation to observe.

Numerous studies affirm the benefits to children and youth of direct experience with the natural environment (Charles, Louv, Bodner, Guns & Stahl, 2009):

- Children's daily exposure to natural settings improved their capacity to focus and enhanced their cognitive abilities.
- Academic achievement among youth improved when school curricula was organized around the outdoor environment.
- The regular practice of nature-based, experiential learning at school significantly improved student outcomes in Social studies, Science, Language Arts, and Math.
- One study showed that 90 percent of respondents -which included parents, teachers, and principals-reported increased student enthusiasm and engagement in learning that occurred outdoors in comparison to learning indoors.

With this in view, haiku that include season words would seem to take educators toward an important intersection where Writing/poetry meets Outdoor Education/ Experiential Learning.

Finally, the student engagement was high. To assess this on an additional measure, the following grid of the difference between Engagement and On Task behaviours was used in relation to the students' observed behaviour while writing and sharing haiku;

ENGAGED	JUST ON TASK
Students are having to use their minds, think and problem-solve	Students are quiet, well-behaved and some are tuned out
Students are paying attention and participating in discussions	A few students participate
It is a culture of commitment to learning and growing rather than a culture of compliance to adults, or emphasis on marks	"Why are we doing this?" comes up often. Emphasis on compliance and marks.
Student behaviour issues are at a minimum	Student behaviour issues emerge
Students rarely shut down early	Students shut down early

On each measure, the students at Westhill Institute who were participating in the haiku lessons demonstrated engaged behaviour. This was true across students with a range of proficiencies. This affirmed that the structure of the lessons and the accessibility of the haiku writing were age-appropriate. Also, it affirmed that the writing and sharing were of high interest and that engagement, while it was clearly the general norm of the class, engagement was also present for students specifically during these lessons as well. This was an encouraging result, and one that would bear further replicating study.

### Student and Teacher Responses

Student responses were taken at the end of the series of lessons. The students declared the lessons to have been fun, exciting and surprising. They expressed pleasure in their poems and eagerness to see them collected in a booklet with all the haiku in the study. There was a "let's do it again" element to some of the responses. Entering the school some weeks later, the first student I encountered looked up and greeted me with a smile and one word: "Haiku!"

Teachers were in two categories: the classroom teacher and those who dropped in to observe a lesson. The classroom teacher noted that the students were engaged, and responsive, particularly in the imagery of the poems. He said, "I hadn't expected them to use English words in this way. They are ESL students, and I know they have English words, of course, but this surprised me. The framework was supportive and they were very proud of their results." He also noted that some of his students with lower levels of English wrote "very well" in the haiku framework. "It seemed easy for them to follow, to attempt, and to succeed within."

Several teachers commented on the beauty of the students' poems and the children's responses to each other. A Special Education teacher observed students using strong verbal abilities that overcame the child's challenges with expressing ideas in writing. It was suggested by one that this could be a part of evaluating strengths and placements.

### Dissemination of the Research Results and Future Directions

A chapter written by current International Association of Laboratory Schools (IALS) leaders, Sharon Carver, Wendell McConnaha, Richard Messina and Elizabeth Morley speaks to the privilege and responsibility those researching in University Laboratory schools have to disseminate results to classroom teachers. The chapter, "From the Laboratory to the Classroom" is about moving the findings of research based in Lab Schools into the classrooms of the wider world of education. This is inspiration for the dissemination of this study's results. We hope to reach other schools in three ways: Inviting possible participation from other schools who might have interest in being part of the study in future;



writing the results for the IALS Journal, and/or speaking to schools, professional groups, and at conferences about the work. Currently I hope to present at the Haiku North America Conference in 2017 where I have an application in for a presentation, and at IALS Conference in Pittsburgh in 2018. The work will also be written up in the Jackman Institute of Child Study's Natural Curiosity newsletter which reaches hundreds of teachers in Ontario and beyond. A larger study would be a welcome and natural next step, but this study has already raised and strengthened the call for including haiku internationally in both Environmental Education and English as a Second Language curricula. It inspires action on raising inclusion of haiku with Boards of Education and School Districts.

## **Conclusion**

That haiku can be a significant educational tool is well known in many circles in North America today, but this study reinforces a methodology that frees the student writer to express, that inspires the student observer to see the world newly, and that requires the student listeners to respond to each other in ways that are personal and passionate. Growing haiku sensitivity, language acquisition and nature awareness in our students and in our schools is within the reach of this study, and its outcomes. *Haiku Lessons: An International Study Exploring the Potential of Haiku Writing and Haiku Sharing in Teaching English as a Second Language and Environmental Education* opens a pathway and invites educators along the haiku journey.

In sum, it is the work of researchers to make robust, collegial connections in public schools, international schools, laboratory schools, and universities. I hope that this study, conducted as Kobe Shinwa University's Visiting Scholar, and with their support, exemplifies this school/university partnership in research. Its goal has been to make a contribution to research that strengthens education for all. Haiku can be an uncommonly rich resource, providing several populations of educators with tools for change. As research findings are translated into the living laboratory of classrooms in schools, one can find theory made visible, adding value to the utility and reach of research. While translation between the Japanese experience and the North American experience of haiku was and is necessary, may this research serve that other form of translation, that between the world of the academic and that of the classroom teacher. It is, after all, the uptake of good ideas by both communities, that will eventually mean the research we do truly reaches those it is designed to support - the children.

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E.M.

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